



Roadrunner

(*Geococcyx Californianus*)

Order: Cuculiformes Family: Cuculidae

SIZE: 20-25 inches, half of which is tail feathers.

DESCRIPTION: Buff-colored underside with a mixture of black, bronze and buff feathers on the breast. Back and tail are black and white with blue, green and bronze iridescence. Bushy crest on top of the head, that raises and lowers when their curiosity is aroused. Long legs and a sleek body make it built for speed. Feet are zygodactyl, which means two toes point forward and two point backward.

VOICE: Cooing call during courtship, a whine by the female during nest building, and clattering sounds made by rolling their mandibles together.

LOCOMOTION: Preferred method of travel is walking or running. Occasionally they will fly for short distances.

HABITS: Ground dwelling bird found in open arid country with scattered cover, dry brush, chaparral and other desert scrub. Very adaptable and can control its own body temperature. Absorbs heat by the efficient use of solar energy. The roadrunner is non-migratory, and roosts in dense trees or shrubs during cold weather.

DIET: Insects, snakes, lizards, rodents, small birds, fruit and seeds. Beats its captured prey against a rock or other hard object to crush the bones, so it may be swallowed whole. Able to capture and eat snakes up to 2 feet in length.

RANGE: Southwestern United States, including parts of Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and southward into Mexico.

FAMILY LIFE: Male courts the female by offering a "gift" of an insect, reptile or some other enticing morsel. If the offering does not impress her, she may refuse to mate with him. After successful mating, the female lays 2-8 eggs at intervals of 1 to 4 days. Incubation period is 18 days for each egg. Both male and female take part in caring for the eggs and raising the young. Juveniles are ready to leave the nest when they are 14-21 days old.

NESTING: Flat stick nest lined with grass, leaves or feathers, usually in a shrub or cactus.

ENEMIES: Raccoons, bobcats, hawks and coyotes. Roadrunners also fall victim to adverse weather conditions during winter months and road-kill.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

- Among certain Native American tribes the roadrunner represents great magic, strength, endurance and courage, namely for the bird's willingness to fight rattlesnakes.
- These birds can be found at elevations ranging from sea level to altitudes of 7500 feet.
- Roadrunners can run as fast as 18 mph.

Track

Roadrunner track in the sand.
Prints are approxmaely 3"
long and 10" apart.



Range

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